

ever, if the remaining kidney is injured. 4. Nephritides due to poisons, bilateral and hematogenous origin, are characterized by molecular retention and consequently by more or less marked pathologic reduction in the freezing-point. The disturbance is greater and sets in earlier when the vascular apparatus of the kidney is principally affected or the nephritis is diffuse than when the tubular apparatus is in greater degree affected, but in all instances the reduction is proportionate to the intensity of the pathogenic factor and the degree of anatomic alteration. Mechanical obstruction of the urinary tubules by means of artificial infarcts also results in molecular retention and in corresponding reduction in the freezing-point of the blood. 5. Pathologic reduction in the freezing-point of the blood is induced by the retention of the products of nitrogenous metabolism, but not by that of sodium chlorid; the latter may even exhibit attenuation.

The existence of anemia or of anasarca may prevent the usual reduction in the freezing-point in the presence of molecular retention, and the phenomenon is not of so much importance in the diagnosis of renal disease as it is in formulating decisions as to the performance of nephrectomy in suitable cases.

---

#### "CHEAP JOHN" MEDICINE.

The medical profession has not been troubled in this country as much as in Great Britain, by competition of low-priced club practice, but we now and then see signs of its existence. In our large cities we have the possibly greater evil of dispensary abuses, and everywhere exists the cheap and nasty in quackery of every variety. To some form of this, we assume, refers the following quotation from a lay paper that has recently come to our notice: "It might have been supposed that the climax of low-priced medical treatment had been reached when patients could receive medical advice, with medicine, at the rate of \$5.00 a month, and later as low as \$1.00 a month, but it seems the bottom has not been touched. A medical institution advertises in the local papers to give the best physician's advice, consultation and examination and furnish medicines all for 50 cents." The lay journal goes on to say that the next step will probably be for newspapers and magazines to furnish subscribers with medical advice and medicine gratis, and then perhaps some one will go one better and throw in life insurance. It may be some little consolation to feel that this sort of fraud in time makes work for the true physician, but it is a melancholy one at best to the philanthropist. There is a great waste of pain and suffering generally in this world through the "cheap John" doctors.

---

#### PAINLESS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

A new proposal has been offered to lessen the sufferings of the unfortunate murderer who has to undergo the pangs of capital punishment. Instead of hanging, which has already been held as barbarous and has been abolished in New York, or electrocution, which it is claimed is not the same in its action on all persons and

therefore may even sometimes cause pain, it is now proposed, in a paper read before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, to carry out capital punishment by poisoning with hydrocyanic acid and under conditions that will make it entirely painless and unexpected. The convicted criminal is to be taken to the death-chamber, which is to be connected by pipes with retorts generating the vapor, and some night when he is peacefully sleeping, it is to be suddenly turned on and he will peacefully pass out of this mortal existence. The date is not to be fixed, but is to be at the discretion of the authorities, within certain limits, covering several months, so that it is presumed he will be spared the mental agony of expectation to a large extent. The proposition might go still further and leave him in ignorance of his conviction, but that does not seem to have been suggested. After all, it may be considered questionable whether any of the plans offered has any great advantage. Sudden death of any kind is likely to be comparatively painless, and the elimination of the element of expectancy is a rather dubious advantage. If capital punishment is deemed necessary, it is to some extent as an example and deterrent, as well as to eliminate harmful individuals, and it is doubtful whether it should be made attractive. The old public executions made popular heroes, the newer suprahuman methods may err also in another way.

---

#### IS CHILD HOMICIDE LEGALIZED?

The attorney-general of Illinois has lately rendered a decision that the courts ought not to confirm, or if they do, it will be time to correct their narrow interpretation by new and unequivocal legislation. A child aged 6 years, died in Douglas county under Christian Science treatment, and in reply to an inquiry from the state's attorney of the county the attorney-general rendered an official opinion that, according to the clause in the Medical Practice Act, "mental and spiritual" means are legalized and that the sections of the criminal code against willfully endangering the life of a child did not apply, since it was not done willfully, but in good faith. This is equivalent to saying that if the parents or others in charge of an infant are under any kind of an honest delusion that would make them sacrifice or endanger its life, the law gives it no protection. He does not even hint at the rational alternative—their seclusion in a lunatic asylum—probably recognizing the fact that such imbeciles are too numerous in these present days of popular voodooism to protect infant life in that way. While, as the *Chicago Tribune* says, according to our practice in this country, "a man or woman who has reached years of discretion" is supposed to be able to take care of himself or herself, it is no enlightened view of the law that applies the same construction of it to helpless infants, or children who can not act for themselves. If this opinion is to be the last word on the subject we may look for an extensive slaughter of the innocents, by the well-paid mercenaries of "Christian Science," "Dowieism," and other like fads. We had supposed that the premiums on murder were wiped out of the law, but according to this attorney-general we are having new ones enacted by statute. It can not be that he is right, and the opinion should be